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ABSTRACT

In 1980 and 1989 the Greater Cincinnati Survey identified first- and second-generation urban Appalachians, finding that they comprised 20-25% of the population of Hamilton County (Ohio). As migration from Appalachia has slowed, this group has aged relative to the rest of the population. Compared to blacks and non-Appalachian whites, urban Appalachians were more likely to be married, to report a religious affiliation, and to be unemployed. The family continued to be a strong social unit, with the extended family and other urban Appalachian friends forming the primary social network. Most urban Appalachians lived in working-class neighborhoods, some of them in the suburbs. The high school dropout rate for urban Appalachians decreased from 27% in 1980 to 17% in 1989. The educational attainment of urban Appalachians was higher than that of blacks but lower than that of other whites. Adult education and job training will be important issues in the near future, since urban Appalachians lost socioeconomic ground and slipped into lower-status jobs during the 1980s. The assimilation of urban Appalachians into the dominant urban society is slow, limited by a sense of cultural identity that is maintained through regular visits "home," and by a perception of exclusion from the economic and social mainstream. (SV)

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The Current Status and Future Prospects of Urban Appalachians

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Phillip J. Obermiller and Michael E. Maloney

Most of today's urban Appalachians have lived outside the region for all of or most of their lives. Because millions of Appalachians have made the transition from rural newcomers to long-term residents of urban neighborhoods, appropriate questions are being asked. Now that more than three decades have passed since the peak years of Appalachian migration, how are these people and their children faring in the cities? How do they compare with other urban groups on key social indicators? Are Appalachians assimilating into urban culture or returning to the region? What key social policy questions have they raised for urban administrators and politicians?

In attempting to shed some light on these questions, we will draw on a number of studies that use a variety of methods. The Cincinnati metropolitan area has an extensive history of Appalachian inmigration and an equally extensive stock of current studies on urban Appalachians. Although these studies focus on Appalachians in the urban counties of northern Kentucky and southwestern Ohio, we believe that the findings also can be applied to urban Appalachians living in similar metropolitan areas elsewhere.

First we will discuss the available demographic information on first- and second-generation urban Appalachians. We then consider the conditions affecting third and later generations of Appalachians. We conclude with an analysis that looks beyond the current status of urban Appalachians to the issues that will affect them in the 1990s.

Phillip J. Obermiller is an associate professor of sociology at Northern Kentucky University and a member of the Urban Appalachian Council's Research Committee.

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The Early Generations: A Demographic Profile

In both 1980 and 1989 the Greater Cincinnati Survey included questions that allowed for identification of first- and second-generation urban Appalachians. The surveys used a random-digit dialing technique to contact approximately one thousand respondents in Hamilton County, Ohio, the county in which Cincinnati is located. The sampling procedure and the response rate allowed for confidence intervals ranging from 3 to 5 percent for each question. The respondents were divided into three comparison groups: white non-Appalachians ("white"), black non-Appalachians ("black"), and white Appalachians ("Appalachian"). Because of black Appalachians' small representation in the sample (2.3%) and their ambiguous status, they were not included in either the black or the Appalachian group.

When we take into consideration the third and later generations, we estimate that as many as 40% of the county's total population is at least partly Appalachian.

The first and second generations of urban Appalachians make up a substantial portion of Hamilton County's population. In 1980 they constituted one-quarter of the people living in the county; nine years later they still accounted for one in five of the county's residents. Although migration has slowed, natural increase is adding to the urban Appalachian group. When we take into consideration the third and later generations, we estimate that as many as 40% of the county's total population is at least partly Appalachian.

Age

First- and second-generation urban Appalachians are divided about evenly in numbers, but (as one would expect) they have different age dynamics. The average age of first-generation Appalachians in 1989 was 49; the average age for the second generation was 43. Although the longitudinal data show that Appalachians are aging faster than non-Appalachians and that the first generation is aging more slowly than the second generation, we must be cautious in inter-

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The Subsequent Generations: Prospects for the Future

The situation of the third and later generations of urban Appalachians can be described in more qualitative fashion. A minority have obtained a college education, have moved away from blue-collar Appalachian neighborhoods, and are largely assimilated into the larger urban culture. Others have moved from the old neighborhoods but maintain blue-collar lifestyles, including their extended family and a group of Appalachian friends as their primary social network. Most urban Appalachians, however, continue to live in working-class neighborhoods whose principal residents are other white Appalachians.

Neighborhoods

Appalachian neighborhoods are located in various places within the metropolitan area and vary greatly in socioeconomic status. Some are inner-city neighborhoods characterized by multifamily rental units and high rates of underemployment, unemployment, and poverty. These communities are affected by the social problems typical of such areas: high rates of crime and delinquency, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, child neglect, and family violence. Although it is common to think of these neighborhoods as slums, it is more useful to regard them as low-income ethnic neighborhoods or urban villages. An urban village is an area of low-cost housing in which a group, (usually immigrants) rebuilds the family, community, and economic structures that were debilitated by migration. Life in the urban village is more familiar to the first and second generations of Appalachian migrants than to later generations.

. . . urban Appalachians of the third and later generations have been devastated by the decline of the automobile, steel, and other manufacturing industries in the midwest.

Researcher William Philliber found that most urban Appalachians in Cincinnati do not live in inner-city neighborhoods but in working-class communities, some of which are located in the suburbs. Appalachians also make up a significant part of the population of the small towns and cities that surround metropolitan core cities like Cincinnati.

Schools and Jobs

Education is a critical issue for the Appalachians of the third and later generations. Early migrants could obtain manufacturing jobs that merely required physical dexterity and some mechanical aptitude. Today, however, when most jobs with reasonable salaries require advanced skills, urban Appalachian youth drop out of high school in large numbers. Many reasons have been advanced to explain the high rates of school failures and dropouts in this group. School administrators point to absenteeism and to a lack of interest in education among Appalachian parents. Appalachians themselves regard urban public school systems as large, impersonal bureaucracies with little cultural sensitivity. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that urban Appalachians in Ohio drop out of school at rates even higher than those of other cultural and racial minorities.

Appalachians themselves regard urban public school systems as large, impersonal bureaucracies with little cultural sensitivity.

The first and second generations of Appalachians arrived in the cities during an era of industrial expansion and strong unions; semi-skilled jobs were plentiful, wages were rising, and health and retirement benefits were generally available. Because of this blue-collar background, urban Appalachians of the third and later generations have been devastated by the decline of the automobile, steel, and other manufacturing industries in the midwest. These workers and their families have adapted in a variety of ways. Some have returned to the mountains, but this option is limited by the lack of work and housing in rural Appalachia. Others have moved to the urban growth centers of the south and the west in search of work. Some of those who stayed in the Cincinnati area found replacement jobs in the industrial sector, but many were forced to settle for lower-paying jobs in the service sector of the formal economy or to resort to work in the informal economy. Family income is maintained by increasing the number of workers; spouses and children take jobs to supplement the household budget.

Families

Appalachians still use family networks to find employment or to obtain a temporary place to live while seeking a job. Those who lack family support may go on public assistance or receive help from their church or a local social agency, but this strategy is considered a last resort. Appalachians living in inner-city areas who have lost the support of their families and of neighborhood social welfare agencies can be found living on the streets, staying in shelters for the homeless, and standing in the lines at soup kitchens.

Health

As with education and employment, health conditions among the third and later generations vary greatly. Urban Appalachians in poverty have high rates of coronary heart disease, diabetes, and work-related disabilities. Their children suffer from lack of perinatal care, poor nutrition, and the effects of urban pollution. Sexually transmitted diseases affect many Appalachian teenagers. Injuries related to work are common among all generations of urban Appalachians, as are illnesses due to stress and diet, such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Appalachian Identity

Are the later generations losing their Appalachian identity and assimilating into the cultural mainstream? With some exceptions, most urban Appalachians are concentrated in blue-collar enclaves in urban neighborhoods, suburban communities, and small towns. Because of their numbers they often form the majority population in these places. In addition to living near relatives and other people of Appalachian background, they associate with their own kind at work and in their churches, labor unions, civic associations, and schools, as well as in local bars and restaurants. Their music, dance, crafts, and artistic traditions are renewed constantly through arts and crafts festivals, bluegrass preservation societies, records, tapes, films, and radio programs. Although there are more Appalachians in Ohio's Miami Valley (Cincinnati, Hamil-

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The Early Generations: A Demographic Profile

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preting these figures. First of all, our sample consists of only the first two generations of Appalachians; therefore the Appalachians appear to be older than the non-Appalachians because the latter group includes all generations in the analysis. Second, because first-generation Appalachians naturally have a higher mortality rate than those of the second generation, their average age appears to be rising more slowly over time.

Despite these cautions, the data show clearly that first- and second-generation Appalachians form a large group whose average age is substantially above that of the non-Appalachian groups in Hamilton County. In 1989 the average age of blacks was 39, for whites it was 43, and for Appalachians it was 46. The early migrants and their children are growing old, and this fact will have a strong effect on our interpretation of other Appalachian demographic characteristics.

The ratio of men to women in the urban Appalachian community has shifted over time to a higher proportion of women. By 1989, 61 percent of Appalachians surveyed were women. This finding is consistent with an aging population, in which men tend to die at an earlier age than women.

Residency

The fact that migration has slowed and Appalachians are long-term residents in urban areas is documented in the 1989 figures on length of residence. For blacks the average length of residence in the county was 29 years, for whites it was 32, and for Appalachians 31. Since 1980 these figures represent a slight increase for blacks, a modest increase for whites, and a large increase for Appalachians. Again, this change can be linked to the age factor: because Appalachians tend to be older overall, they have had a greater opportunity to establish a longer term of residency. Nonetheless it is important to note that Appalachians in general are long-term urban residents with very few recent migrants; only 3.5 percent have lived in Hamilton County two years or less, and 67.3 percent have lived here 21 years or more.

From another perspective on residency, Appalachians are becoming more urban over time. In 1980, 68.6 percent of the Appalachian respondents lived in the suburban areas of the county surrounding the city of Cincinnati; only 31.4 percent were city dwellers. By 1989 a significant shift had taken place: 44.4 percent lived in the city and 55.6 percent lived elsewhere in the county. The comparative statistics show that the proportions of blacks and Appalachians living in the Cincinnati portion of Hamilton County have increased greatly between 1980 and 1989. Cincinnati is becoming a city with a growing minority population that is mostly black and Appalachian.

Marital Status

The data on marital status and household size reveal that the urban Appalachian family remains a strong social unit. Appalachians are more likely to be married or widowed than either blacks or whites. Conversely, they are much less likely never to have married than either of the other two groups. More than 7 in 10 Appalachian respondents reported that they were married; this fact can be attributed in part to the higher average age of this group. This attribution, however, is weakened somewhat by the fact that urban Appalachian divorce rates are about one-third of those reported by blacks and on a par with those reported by whites.

Household Size

The average household size for Appalachians (3.1) remained constant over the nine-year period of the two surveys, and is about the same as that for blacks and for whites. The average number of adults in Appalachian households (2.3) increased slightly from 1980 to 1989 while decreasing for the other two groups. The average number of children under 18 in Appalachian households (.77) declined between 1980 and 1989, and is lower than that of either blacks or whites. The larger number of adults and the smaller number of children in Appalachian households are consistent with the higher average age of the household members.

Religious Affiliation

Urban Appalachians are the least likely of the three groups to report no religious affiliation. Seventy percent of those surveyed reported being Protestant, but nearly 20 percent reported being Catholic, a substantial increase since 1980. The proportion of Protestants among Appalachians and among blacks is similar; these groups differ strongly from the whites, 49 percent of whom are Catholic and 41 percent of whom are Protestant.

Education

Educational attainment improved for urban Appalachians in the interval between the two surveys. In 1989 Appalachians had fewer high school dropouts than in 1980 (17% versus 27%) and more students in college or college graduates (45% versus 36%). In 1989, however, Appalachians had the same relative status in educational attainment as in 1980: they fared better than blacks but less well than other whites. The data on educational attainment show that blacks are more likely than Appalachians to drop out of high school and college, whereas whites are more likely to complete high school and college than Appalachians.

Occupation

The overall occupational status of urban Appalachians declined between 1980 and 1989. During this period Appalachians gained in the number of sales and clerical jobs (+14%) but lost ground in the categories of craftspersons (-10%) and operatives (-7%). Unfortunately, much of the significant employment growth for Appalachians occurred in the lowest occupational category, that of laborers and service workers (+12%). Blacks also showed substantial growth in the labor and service category, whereas the growth for whites in this area was only half as large.

The unemployment rate among Appalachians fell slightly from 1980 to 1989, but is far more than those reported by both whites and blacks in the 1989 survey. This statistic, however, must be tempered with the knowledge that many Appalachians operate outside the standard employer/employee relationship: they work for themselves in the informal economy in home maintenance, roofing, hauling, appliance and auto repair, child care, and selling goods at flea markets. These individuals may not consider themselves "employed" in the traditional sense, but they are working hard to maintain their family's income.

Income

Between 1980 and 1989 the number of Appalachian families with total incomes of less than $20,000 a year declined, and the number with annual incomes over $30,000 rose. Yet Appalachian families lost ground in the middle-income category, $20,000 to $30,000. Overall Appalachian representation across the family income categories is on a par with that for white families and is significantly better than for black families. Although this pattern may vary between inner-city and suburban neighborhoods, it remained constant at the county level from 1980 to 1989. A significant portion of Appalachian family income is provided by women, some four-fifths of whom are in the labor force.

Comments and Policy Recommendations

We now analyze the data on urban Appalachians and comment on the social policy and program implications of this information. In discussing the data we will take care again to distinguish among urban Appalachians both by age group (first and generations versus third and later generations) and by socioeconomic status (suburban versus inner-city).

Aging

The first and second generations of urban Appalachians are clearly an aging population. During the 1990s their concerns can be expected to move away from education and employment and to turn to health care. Moreover, many urban Appalachians are aging in place rather than returning to the region for retirement. In fact, many elderly Appalachians are being moved from the region by their urban kinfolk to metropolitan areas, where health care facilities, nursing homes, retirement communities, and the potential for in-home care are much more abundant.

The aging of the early generations also has implications for urban Appalachian women, the traditional caregivers in the Appalachian culture. At a time when the number of children per household is beginning to fall and when women's educational attainment and labor-force participation have begun to rise, care for the elderly will become a larger part of the responsibilities in Appalachian households. Much of this duty will devolve upon the women.

From a policy standpoint, the aging of the urban Appalachian population will require more resources in health care and geriatric services. From a programmatic point of view, social welfare organizations must be concerned not only with the Appalachian elderly but also with their caregivers, who will be mostly working women.

Adult Education and Job Training

Among the third and later generations, adult education and job training will continue to be important issues. The longitudinal data show urban Appalachians losing ground on a socioeconomic treadmill: even as their educational attainment improves, the demand for education in the labor force increases more rapidly. This situation explains why members of the first and second generations who have increased their rates of high school completion are gradually slipping into lower-status job categories over time. Their families can maintain a stable income only by maximizing the number of workers in the household. If the cost of living increases while family size remains stable, many working-class urban Appalachians will slip into poverty.

Poverty

The situation for inner-city Appalachians is even more grim. Half of the adults in these neighborhoods have no more than a high school education, school dropout rates are as high as 75 percent, and youth unemployment is a serious problem. Although serious social problems exist in these neighborhoods, the urban Appalachian community is not without resources to deal with them. In Cincinnati, community schools have been founded to provide on-site GED programs, adult education courses, and college-level classes. The Appalachian extended family has been battered but not broken as a social unit; it still provides its members with the social and economic resources necessary to survive in an urban setting.

Policy makers need to focus not only on the problems in the urban Appalachian community, but also on the inherent strengths. They should make every effort to recognize and reinforce the successful survival mechanisms that are operating in low-income Appalachian neighborhoods. Academic and job training projects, for example, should be designed to bolster Appalachian family interaction and local community schooling initiatives. Social welfare programs should support local initiatives among urban Appalachians rather than attempting to supplant them.

School Reform

School reform is a critical issue among urban Appalachians. In the inner-city school systems, stemming the dropout rates among Appalachian youths continues to be a concern for most of the community but for relatively few school administrators. Some suburban school systems have better retention rates among Appalachian youths, but these students generally finish in the bottom half of their graduating class. One programmatic suggestion that has yet to be implemented widely is the inclusion of Appalachian studies units both in teacher training sessions and in the school curricula.

Race Relations

Another area of concern implicit in the comparative survey data gathered in the Cincinnati area is the relationship among the urban Appalachians, the blacks, and the other whites. As we have noted, blacks and Appalachians are the two largest minorities in the city; yet non-Appalachian whites appear to hold most of the economic and political power in Cincinnati. The black community is frustrated, fearing the loss of hard-won legislative and constitutional gains; urban blacks are wary of sharing their meager power and resources with their Appalachian neighbors. Unless new means of cooperation are developed between these two groups, conflict over power and resource allocation will increase.

The policy direction is clear: municipal governments in cities such as Cincinnati need to hold mediation sessions with black and Appalachian leaders to discuss cooperation in conflict resolution and resource allocation. Specific areas for mediation include control of community agencies and the allocation of employment and training funds. In education, black leaders favor school desegregation plans that entail districtwide busing, whereas urban Appalachians favor community control of neighborhood schools with local attendance. Resolution of these differences would allow both groups to focus on the quality of education they seek for their children.

Not all issues polarize urban blacks and Appalachians, however. The two groups frequently have similar agendas in opposing police brutality and the displacement of low-income families from their neighborhoods. They share concerns about the inclusion of minority studies in school curricula and about the effects of heavy industrial pollution on their children. Urban Appalachians and their black neighbors have great potential for either conflict or cooperation. The coming decade may well decide which alternative will prevail.

Topics for 1991 Issues of the ADVOCATE:

- Appalachian Issues in Urban Education
- Health Status of Urban Appalachian Children in Cincinnati

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Policy Recommendations

- The aging of the urban Appalachian population will require more resources in health care and geriatric services. Support systems for caregivers, mostly working women, must be provided.
- Adult education and job training will be required to help Appalachians compete with the demand for more education in the labor force.
- Efforts to curb the dropout rate in Appalachian communities can be assisted by the inclusion of Appalachian studies units in teacher training and school curricula.
- Already existing programs which make use of the Appalachian extended family and community networking system (i.e. community schools, neighborhood services) need to be expanded.
- Coalitions between the blacks and Appalachian community to work on mutual issues should be reinforced. While blacks and Appalachians are the two largest minorities in the city, non-Appalachian whites appear to hold much of the economic and political power.

Conclusion

In the next 10 years urban Appalachians will continue to deal with issues that have engaged them in the past, particularly education and employment. Establishing cooperative relations with other racial or ethnic minorities will continue to be a priority in an era of shrinking resources. New concerns will include a stronger emphasis on health care for the elderly population and the very young. Adult education and job retraining will become increasingly important as the decade advances.

The urban Appalachians we have studied do not lack the resources necessary to deal with the changing urban scene. They are maintaining relatively strong family bonds, supporting and using their own cultural institutions and organizations, and devising new ways to deal with old problems. The future for urban Appalachians holds the promise of great struggles and of great successes.

Appalachian Identity

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ton, Middletown, Dayton, Xenia, and Troy) than in all of eastern Kentucky, the residents of these towns make use of the easy access to their homeplaces and kinfolk in the mountains. To a certain extent urban Appalachians resemble Mexican-Americans in the southwestern United States, who gain cultural support from visits or frequent communication with their home districts in rural Mexico.

Most studies of migrant groups find that ethnic identity begins to dwindle with the third generation . The process of assimilation is slowed, however, by ethnic organizations with strong leadership, which promote the group's cultural heritage and political concerns. The process is also slowed by the presence of discrimination and by the group members' perception of exclusion from the economic and social mainstream. We believe that all the factors we have cited are limiting the assimilation of Appalachians into the dominant urban society. There is no danger that Appalachians will disappear from the social map of urban America in the 1990s.

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